



## INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

### Chair's Corner



The end of another calendar year approaches!

As everyone is making plans for the holiday season, your FEB staff has made plans for our activities and events in 2017.

During our recent Executive Policy

Council meeting, the group identified the following initiatives. You will see information developed and distributed for these in the coming months:

- FEB Awards Program (to honor the excellence of Federal Employees and Teams)
- Leadership FEB Program
- Quarterly Leadership Training Classes
- Retirement Training (full day)
- My Free Taxes
- Newsletter
- Houston FEB Facebook page

In addition to the bulleted items above, there may be extra opportunities to engage as topics, instructors and/or speakers are identified.

Not only did we plan for these items, but we've already accomplished one! Our Executive Director quickly created the

Facebook page, including the November newsletter. Watch this Facebook page for additional useful information:

<https://www.facebook.com/HoustonFEB/>

*Due to deadlines involved, watch for the FEB Awards Program solicitation in mid-December and early January. The deadline to have award nominations in to the FEB office will be in late February 2017. This is an early notification; you may wish to begin the identification process within your agency in order to have your finalized nominations submitted by the deadline!*

A resource that you will be receiving over the next month or two will be:

- FY 17 Hazardous Weather & Emergency Communication Plan

I look forward to an exciting year of changes, challenges and opportunities and I hope to see you at some of our events!

Tim Jeffcoat, Chairman

<i>Inside Story</i>	<i>Pg</i>	<i>Inside Story</i>	<i>Pg</i>
TSP Investments	2	Wells Fargo & YOU	6
Spotlighting Agency	3	Holiday Apps	7
First Impression	4	Increase Productivity	8
First Impression (cont'd)	5	Criticism	9

## What Can Be Invested in the TSP

Not all types of federal compensation can be invested in the TSP. Instead, investments must come from “basic pay,” which is defined as the amount of pay based on the rate fixed by law or administrative action for the position held by an employee and is the same as basic pay for federal civilian retirement purposes.

The following elements of pay are included in the determination of basic pay for TSP purposes:

- Locality-based comparability pay as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5304
- Environmental and night differentials for wage employees (5 U.S.C. 4343(c)(4) and 4343(f))
- Premium pay for standby time under 5 U.S.C. 5545(c)(1)
- Premium pay for law enforcement officers (5 U.S.C. 5545(c)(2), i.e., admin uncontrollable overtime)
- Availability pay (LEAP) for criminal investigators as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5545a
- Physicians’ comparability allowance as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5948
- Overtime compensation for customs officers as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 8331(3)(G)
- Additional compensation paid to employees serving in the Republic of Panama (22 U.S.C. 3657)

The following elements of pay and types of payments are not basic pay for TSP purposes:

- Other overtime pay
- Awards, bonuses, and allowances (includes danger pay)
- Foreign and domestic post differential for general schedule, and foreign post differential for wage employees
- Severance pay
- Retroactive pay granted to a retired or deceased employee pursuant to a wage survey
- Lump-sum payment for leave, and Voluntary separation incentive payment (buyout)
- Workers’ compensation payments from the Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs
- Sunday, holiday and military pay
- Supervisory differentials
- Night differentials for GS employees

<http://www.fedweek.com/retirement-policy/can-invested-tsp/>

## Retirement Benefits outside Government Lacking

In a report that underscores the difference between the government and the private sector in retirement benefits, a study has found that only about two-thirds of private sector employees have access to a retirement savings plan through their employer and that only about half of private sector employees participate in such a plan by making personal investments.

The report from the Center for Retirement Research added that even of those who have a 401(k) type plan, fewer make investments than federal employees do through the TSP. In the TSP, about two-thirds of CSRS employees make personal investments even though they do not receive matching government contributions for doing so. Among FERS employees, all but about 10 percent invest personally.

The study examined data from several sources that show varying percentages of both eligibility and participation and noted that state and local government employees, like federal employees, are covered by defined benefit plans with few exceptions.

It concluded: “In the end, it is probably reasonable to say that about 50 percent of private sector workers participate in a retirement plan. Of course, a higher percentage will pick up coverage sometime over their worklife. But those workers who move in and out of coverage end up with inadequate retirement balances, and roughly one-third of households reach their sixties with no retirement plan at all.”

Article reprinted from:

<http://www.fedweek.com/retirement-financial-planning/retirement-benefits-outside-government-lacking/>

## Spotlighting Information in Public Service

### Did you Know?



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

**Community Relations  
Dallas Field Office**

Enforcement and Removal Operations

**ABOUT ICE**

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the principal investigative arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the second largest investigative agency in the federal government.

**ABOUT ERO**

ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) is made up of agents, officers, and professional staff who are sworn to enforce the nation's immigration laws in a fair and effective manner. ICE identifies and removes aliens who present a danger to national security, risk to public safety or defy the integrity of U.S. immigration laws and border control.

**ERO Community Outreach**

**Assists** stakeholders in resolving complaints and concerns with ERO policies and operations through the Community and Detainee Helpline and other inquiry channels;

**Engages** stakeholders on immigration enforcement and detention policies, programs, and initiatives to foster accurate understanding of ERO's mission and core values and promote collaboration;

**Recommends** changes and enhancements to custody policies and procedures based on stakeholder input and internal subject matter expertise; and

**Develops** innovative ERO custody management programs and assists in their implementation and oversight.

**Commitment to Community Outreach**

ERO is dedicated to ensuring the public is fully informed of the agency's immigration enforcement efforts. In support of the agency's mission, ERO is committed to transparency, collaboration and resolving concerns with community stakeholders. These stakeholders include the public, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, academic institutions, attorneys, and advocacy groups. You may contact ERO by calling the ICE Community and Detainee Helpline at **1-888-351-4024** during regular business hours, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday.

**Field Community Engagement**

In the field there are 24 Community Field Liaisons, which correspond to ICE ERO's 24 Field Offices that maintain full coverage of the nation. These dedicated liaisons are in the best position to directly resolve issues and concerns regarding ERO practices, policies, and procedures on a local level. The cooperation between the field and ICE Headquarters is critical to effective outreach and issue management.

**Meet Your Officer**

The Dallas CRO works with community stakeholders and leaders to respond to questions and/or concerns regarding immigration efforts. The CRO's job is to inform the community of ICE's enforcement priorities, answer your questions and concerns related to immigration enforcement, and to promote public safety. It is not to determine your immigration status.

**Christopher J. Medina**  
Community Relations Field Liaison  
214-424-7963  
[Dallas.Outreach@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:Dallas.Outreach@ice.dhs.gov)

**Connect with ICE ERO Community Relations**  
ICE ERO Community & Detainee Helpline: **1-888-351-4024**  
E-mail: [Dallas.Outreach@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:Dallas.Outreach@ice.dhs.gov)  
Web site: [www.ice.gov/about/offices/enforcement-removal-operations/ero-outreach/](http://www.ice.gov/about/offices/enforcement-removal-operations/ero-outreach/)

**ERO Dallas Field Office Community Relations**

[www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov)

[www.ice.gov/about/offices/enforcement-removal-operations/ero-outreach/](http://www.ice.gov/about/offices/enforcement-removal-operations/ero-outreach/)  
Submitted by Brad Douglas, AFOD Oklahoma, Dallas Field Office, 918-828-7735



## Making a Great First Impression

### *Getting off to a Good Start*

It takes just a quick glance, maybe three seconds, for someone to evaluate you when you meet for the first time. In this short time, the other person forms an opinion about you based on your appearance, your body language, your demeanor, your mannerisms, and how you are dressed.


With every new encounter, you are evaluated and yet another person's impression of you is formed. These first impression can be nearly impossible to reverse or undo, making those first encounters extremely important, for they set the tone for all the relationships that follows.

So, whether they are in your career or social life, it's important to know how to create a good first impression. This article provides some useful tips to help you do this.

#### **Be on Time**

Someone you are meeting for the first time is not interested in your "good excuse" for running late. Plan to arrive a few minutes early. And allow flexibility for possible delays in traffic or taking a wrong turn. Arriving early is much better than arriving late, hands down, and is the first step in creating a great first impression.

#### **Be Yourself, Be at Ease**

If you are feeling uncomfortable and on edge, this can make the other person ill at ease and that's a sure way to create the wrong impression. If you are calm and confident, so the other person will feel more at ease, and so have a solid foundation for making that first impression a good one. See our article on [Centering](#)  to find out how to calm that adrenaline!

#### **Present Yourself Appropriately**

Of course physical appearance matters. The person you are meeting for the first time does not know you and your appearance is usually

the first clue he or she has to go on.

But it certainly does not mean you need to look like a model to create a strong and positive first impression. (Unless you are interviewing with your local model agency, of course!)

No. The key to a good impression is to present yourself appropriately.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and so the "picture" you first present says much about you to the person you are meeting. Is your appearance saying the right things to help create the right first impression?

Start with the way you dress. What is the appropriate dress for the meeting or occasion? In a business setting, what is the appropriate business attire? Suit, blazer, casual? And ask yourself what the person you'll be meeting is likely to wear – if your contact is in advertising or the music industry, a pinstripe business suit may not strike the right note!

For business and social meetings, appropriate dress also varies between countries and cultures, so it's something that you should pay particular attention to when in an unfamiliar setting or country. Make sure you know the traditions and norms.

And what about your grooming? Clean and tidy appearance is appropriate for most business and social occasions. A good haircut or shave. Clean and tidy clothes. Neat and tidy make up. Make sure your grooming is appropriate and helps make you feel "the part".

Appropriate dressing and grooming help make a good first impression and also help you feel "the part", and so feel more calm and confident. Add all of this up and you are well on your way to creating a good first impression.

#### **A Word About Individuality**

The good news is you can usually create a good impression without total conformity or losing your individuality. Yes, to make a good first impression you do need to "fit in" to some degree. But it all goes back to being appropriate for the situation. If in a business setting, wear appropriate business attire. If at a formal evening social event, wear appropriate evening attire. And express your individuality appropriately within that context.

### **A Winning Smile!**

As the saying goes, "Smile and the world smiles too." So there's nothing like a smile to create a good first impression. A warm and confident smile will put both you and the other person at ease. So smiling is a winner when it comes to great first impressions. But don't go overboard with this – people who take this too far can seem insincere and smarmy, or can be seen to be "lightweights."

### **Be Open and Confident**

When it comes to making the first impression, body language as well as appearance speaks much louder than words.

Use your [body language](#) + to project appropriate confidence and self-assurance. Stand tall, smile (of course), make eye contact, greet with a firm handshake. All of this will help you project confidence and encourage both you and the other person to feel better at ease.

Almost everyone gets a little nervous when meeting someone for the first time, which can lead to nervous habits or sweaty palms. By being aware of your nervous habits, you can try to keep them in check. And controlling a nervous jitter or a nervous laugh will give you confidence and help the other person feel at ease. See our article on [relaxation techniques](#) + for help with this.

### **Small Talk Goes a Long Way**

Conversations are based on verbal give and take. It may help you to prepare questions you have for the person you are meeting for the first time beforehand. Or, take a few minutes

to learn something about the person you meet for the first time before you get together. For instance, does he play golf? Does she work with a local charitable foundation?

Is there anything that you know of that you have in common with the person you are meeting? If so, this can be a great way to open the conversation and to keep it flowing.

### **Be Positive**

Your attitude shows through in everything you do. Project a positive attitude, even in the face of criticism or in the case of nervousness. Strive to learn from your meeting and to contribute appropriately, maintaining an upbeat manner and a smile.

### **Be Courteous and Attentive**

It goes without saying that good manners and polite, attentive and courteous behavior help make a good first impression. In fact, anything less can ruin the one chance you have at making that first impression. So be on your best behavior!

One modern manner worth mentioning is "turn off your mobile phone". What first impression will you create if you are already speaking to someone other than the person you are meeting for the first time? Your new acquaintance deserves 100% of your attention. Anything less and you'll create a less than good first impression.

### **Key Points**

You have just a few seconds to make a good first impression and it's almost impossible ever to change it. So it's worth giving each new encounter your best shot.

Much of what you need to do to make a good impression is common sense. But with a little extra thought and preparation, you can hone your intuitive style and make every first impression not just good but great.

Article taken from Mindtools.com:  
<https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/FirstImpressions.htm?#np>

## ***Wells Fargo and You***

In case you haven't heard, Wells Fargo was recently caught cheating a large number of its customers out of large amount to their money.

Here are some of the problems with financial institutions like Wells Fargo. For the sake of brevity, I'll skip the story of how we got to our current circumstance and focus on the current situation.

**Financial services companies are too large.** With many thousands of employees, it is impossible for top-level executives to know what is going on along the front lines—where customers are communicating with the company and important decisions are being made. While CEOs may claim that their employees are dealing honestly with customers, the truth is that they have no idea.

**Financial services companies are too complex.** The deregulation of banks, insurance companies and investment firms over the past 20 years has allowed what were separate lines of business to merge and overlap. These large financial services corporations are so complex that they are impossible to clearly and thoroughly understand. If the company's employees don't understand their business, then they can't effectively manage it.

**Financial services companies lack accountability.** More specifically, it is almost impossible to find someone who will accept responsibility for dealing with customers. This isn't surprising given the high rates of personnel changes and the way that customers are passed from one employee to another as they attempt to deal with the firm. Further, it is a safe bet that no single individual is responsible for you, as a customer, and accountable for the outcomes that you either suffer or enjoy.

**Financial services companies are publicly owned.** While not all firms suffer from this problem, if you're not dealing with a small, local firm, you are probably dealing with a public company. The problem with public ownership is that many, or even most, of the company's owners are interested in maximizing the return on their investment. Public owners tend to have a short time horizon and don't really care what the company does or how it does it, as long as their investment turns a profit.

These problems combine to create an environment that begs for the exploitation of customers for profit. The company's employees want to maximize their compensation by maximizing revenue and profit. The company's owners want to maximize the return on their investment by maximizing profit growth. So, the firm's stakeholders are primarily interested in maximizing profit. This profit, it turns out, comes at the expense of the firm's customers. The company's win is your loss.

Regardless of what they say, bankers, insurance agents and stock brokers are your adversaries. This is particularly important for TSP investors. As a TSP investor, you have access to the best retirement investment vehicle you'll find. The low cost, simplicity, efficiency and provision of the G Fund make it unbeatable. Unfortunately, financial services firms usually require that you hand your money over to them so that they can skim fees or commissions from your assets. They can only advance their interests if you compromise yours and move your money out of the TSP.

*Article taken from the FINANCES article in Federal Times dated November 2016 written by Mike Miles, a Certified Financial Planner licensee and principal adviser for Variplan, LLC, an independent fiduciary in Vienna, VA.*

## *Preparing for the Holidays!*

### Three apps to help you host a gathering

Let's embrace a new era of house parties, where we invite each other into our homes in ways that do not increase stress, strain or spending.



We have all heard about organized events going awry, whether it's miscommunication, a forgotten invite, food shortages, or monetary mishaps. These events are extremely stressful for the host, and typically uncomfortable for the guests. The smoother your party runs, the more likely everyone will have a good time, including you, the host!

Luckily, with the wide variety of helpful apps on the iOS and Android marketplaces, unfortunate party foul-ups can be prevented. Here are three apps that can make your event organizing run smoothly and easily.

hobnob



#### **Hobnob**

Sometimes the hardest part of organizing a party is not only getting your guests to RSVP, but actually making sure they see the invite in the first place! Not everyone is on social media platforms, and mailing an invite, while definitely impactful, could

take too long. Hobnob cuts straight to where your guest is most likely to see their invite—in a text message on their phone.

This app lets you choose from a variety of images and fonts to craft your invite. Then you simply send your invite to the contacts in your phone, and they can easily reply with a yes or no—your guests don't even need to download the app themselves. You will be able to track the RSVPs, comments and photos related to your event all from one app.

**Use it for: Sending invites, sharing memories of your event.**



#### **Big Oven**

Food is arguably the most important factor in a party, especially if you plan to entertain your guests for a lengthy amount of time. There are various challenges you face when providing food—dietary restrictions,

quality, quantity, amount of prep time, etc.

Big Oven helps alleviate the pressure of figuring out what to serve by offering over 250,000 recipes from a library that has been growing for years. The best part is the app gives you the ability to filter these recipes based on the ingredients that you have available. The recipes are also accompanied by reviews that can attest to the quality of that particular recipe, or suggest ways to improve it.

**Use it for: Finding recipes based on available ingredients.**



#### **Square Cash**

One sticky issue that comes up often when friends or family get together is the cost. Hosting can get expensive fast, especially if you're the only one footing the bill. If a get

together includes guests pitching in to help cover the cost of a special gift or a pricey event, collecting the amount from each can add to the already overflowing "to-do" list.

The Square Cash app is an effortless way to transfer funds back and forth between friends. Once users have linked their accounts, it's simply a matter of typing in an amount, selecting a contact, and hitting "send". No cash out step required.

**Use it for: Transferring party expenses.**

*All three apps are available on iOS and Android.*

Reprinted from Today's Living (a ReMax publication).

## 7 SCHEDULING TIPS GUARANTEED TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND ENHANCE FULFILLMENT

A chicken without a head is active but not productive.

Productivity is about being effective with your time, energy, resources, and talent.

**#4. Schedule blocks of heads-down work time.** Close your door. Turn off email and the phone. Hang a sign on your door that says, 'Do not disturb'. (Give your entire



### Calendar and schedule:

Tenaciously manage your time if you ever hope to achieve amazing results.

**#1. Monitor your use of time.** Many leaders find, after monitoring their use of time, that they're chasing distractions and doing things others should do. *Keep a time journal for a week.*

**#2. Schedule time when you don't do things for others.** I try to concentrate appointments on specific days. Monday is usually the lightest day of my week.

**#3. Choose one priority a day.**

Tip: Delete items from to-do lists that you've been carrying forward for several days. They drain you.

office permission to block out uninterrupted work time.)

**#5. Check email at the top and bottom of the hour.**

**#6. Launch early.** *Stop working, reworking, and perfecting before you launch.* I give myself a maximum of two hours to get a 300 word article written and posted. The article I post is never perfect. My wife and readers point out misspellings, confusing sentences, and grammar errors. Editing happens on the fly.

**#7. Go to bed early so you can get up early.**

Article taken from LeadershipFreak blog at: <https://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/2016/11/14/7-scheduling-tips-guaranteed-to-increase-productivity-and-enhance-fulfillment/>



## Make criticism easier to swallow

***To make negative feedback easier for both you and your employees, consider these pointers ...***

Constructive criticism is a lot like medicine: It's not always pleasant to give or receive, but sometimes it's necessary. To make negative feedback easier for both you and your employees, consider these pointers:

- **Start with a positive purpose.** Are you trying to coach a worker to perform better in the future? Or are you just having a bad day when a worker's mistake sets you off? Remember that snapping at employees won't teach them to do better next time.
- **Choose the right place and time.** You should offer criticism as close as possible to the incident's occurrence. But that doesn't mean you should reprimand workers in front of their peers. Create an opportunity to speak privately.
- **Think about your approach.** When scheduling a meeting to deliver your criticism, don't loudly announce, "I need to talk with you now!" You'll conjure images of being called to the principal's office. Keep it light: "Mary, could you come by my office. I'd like to talk about the XYZ report."
- **Be polite but firm.** Don't beat around the bush or make workers guess why you've asked to meet with them. Get to the point by reviewing the situation and offering your take. Then give workers a chance to respond. Your message will be better received if it's delivered in a discussion rather than a lecture.
- **Focus on the future.** Does this matter require follow-up? Let the employee know. Be careful not to give the impression that you'll be looking his or her shoulder forever.
- **Finish on a positive note.** Thank employees for their cooperation. Emphasize that you're trying to help them do better, and express your confidence that they can improve.

<https://www.managebetter.biz/Main/Articles/30887.aspx>

## Stay cool when a critic gets hot

**Stand up for yourself with this advice.**

No matter how good you are at your job, it's likely that eventually someone is going to be critical of your actions or decisions. The best way to handle criticism is to stay calm and avoid escalating the situation instead of resolving it. Stand up for yourself with this advice:

- **Defuse the situation.** Unexpected criticism can make you blurt out a response. Instead, ask yourself, "Is this the right time and place to deal with this?" If your critic is angry, consider saying something like, "Why don't we meet later today to go over this, so I can investigate what you're saying?" You'll both be able to discuss the issue more calmly.
- **Agree with what's accurate.** The criticism may be at least partly true. Bridge the gap by acknowledging what's accurate before you begin explaining. For example: "It's true we delivered a day late. We warned the clients a day in advance, and they were able to adjust."
- **Get the full picture.** Criticisms often have useful information. Find it by asking, "Exactly what do you mean when you say ... " or "Help me understand." Being objective and open will keep you—and your critic—calm and focused.
- **Disagree clearly and calmly.** Show respect, and earn it, too. Example: "I understand your concerns, but I disagree with you, for a couple of reasons. For example ..." Prefacing your arguments with a clear statement of your position is courteous and gives you a chance to share leadership of the discussion.

—Adapted from *Competitive Edge*

[https://www.managebetter.biz/Main/Articles/Stay\\_cool\\_when\\_a\\_critic\\_gets\\_hot\\_30843.aspx](https://www.managebetter.biz/Main/Articles/Stay_cool_when_a_critic_gets_hot_30843.aspx)